

Hope in Perilous Times, Part 6 - Acts 20:28-38 – June 14th, 2009

- This is part 6 in our series titled; "Hope in Perilous Times." You'll be happy to know that I'm not going to re-preach parts 1-5 over again.
- I found, in this chapter, a total of 15 reminders from the Apostle Paul who sort of rises from the pages to give us hope in difficult times.
- We have studied the first 12 in verses 1-27 and now pick it up in verse 28 where Paul is pouring his heart out to the Ephesian elders.

13. Be On-Guard (Verses 28-31)

28 **Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock** of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 **So be on your guard!** Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

v28-29 Paul tells them to watch over themselves and the church as well, because he knows that savage wolves are coming their way.
v30 He describes these wolves as being those who arise from within the church and distort the truth so as to draw people to themselves.
v31 Paul then warns them to "be on guard" and reminds them that night and day for three years he would weep when he warned them.

Matthew 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. NIV

14. Be Giving (Verses 32-35)

32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

v32 Paul commits them to both the Word and the grace of God because that's what builds us up and gives us our eternal inheritance.
v33-34 He says that instead of covetously expecting them to give to him, he worked hard to provide for himself and others financially.
v35 He tells them the reason for giving and not taking was because of what Jesus said; "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

- During times of economic hardship, our tendency, as one had stated, "is to get all we can, and can all we get." In greed we hoard.
- However, when I look at the scriptures, I'm told that the opposite is true. During perilous times, God can and will bless us if we give.

Proverbs 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor. NIV

Proverbs 11:25 A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. NIV

Psalms 112:5 Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. NIV

2 Corinthians 9:11-15 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! NIV

15. Be Praying (Verses 36-38)

36 When he had said this, **he knelt down with all of them and prayed.** 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship. v36-37 After telling them everything he said he then kneels down with all of them and prays. Then they weep, hug and kiss him goodbye. v38 Luke tells us that what grieved them most was that Paul said they would never see him again, then they accompany him to the ship. - It may go without saying, but we need to "be praying" in these perilous times in which we live. Prayer is actually the deciding factor.

- So, there you have it; 15 things we need to be! Now, let's go be it! Not so fast, because the truth of the matter is you will fail if you try.
- How can we "be" all this? We can't in and of ourselves, and if we try, it is plastic and phony. It has to be in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Allow me to take it a step further; "we are able to be this way when we realize what God has already done." It's our response to Him.
- Often times we get it backwards. We think we need to do certain things and be a certain way in order to get God to respond to us.
- It's actually the other way around; God has already done and been everything for us. When I understand this, I respond to Him in kind.

So often in ministry or service, parenting or discipling, we tend to emphasize what man should do rather than what God has done. In Ephesians 4-6, Paul stressed the behavior of the believer—but not until after he had spent chapters 1-3 telling us we're blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, that we're in Christ, that we have been adopted and sanctified. Paul spoke of what God had done before he spoke of what man should do. I can say to my kids or to the people to whom I'm ministering, "Read your Bible. Worship. Pray. And they'll do it out of obligation for a day or two. But once they begin to understand that they are loved unconditionally, that they are in Christ, that their sin, past, present, and future, is washed away—they will worship and pray, witness and serve not because they *have* to but because they *get* to. The inheritance waiting for you is incredibly wonderful. Don't allow anything to obscure that fact. Paul said to these men whom he knew would go through difficulties, troubles, and challenges, "Remember the inheritance that is yours. Keep focused. Keep centered on the eternal."

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